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Application No: 10/539,941
Amendment C
Reply to Office action of 08/31/2007

Attorney Docket No: 3926.177

IN THE CLAIMS:

The following listing of claims replaces any earlier listing:

1. (currently amended) A method for transporting bodywork panels (12) of a vehicle, the method comprising:
 - providing an endless transport device (10), equipped with a plurality of carrier units (16) that are spaced at intervals in an obliquely upward transport direction (14), each respective carrier unit (16) having at least two carrier elements (26) that project substantially perpendicular to the transport direction (14) and are spaced at a distance in a direction transverse to the transport direction,
 - adjusting the intervals between the carrier units (16) in the transport direction and adjusting the distance between the carrier elements (26) in the direction transverse to the transport direction,
 - stacking an associated group (18) of panels on at least one carrier unit (16),
 - transporting the group (18) of panels as far as a panel removal station (20), and
 - in each case removing an individual bodywork panel (12) by a panel separation device (22),
 - wherein at least one of the number and the design construction of the carrier elements (26) used in a carrier unit (16) can be varied as a function of the geometric shape of a bodywork panel (12),
 - wherein the transport device is an inclined transport device, and
 - wherein the transport direction (14) is adjustable.
2. (currently amended) The method as claimed in claim 1, further comprising wherein the bodywork panels (12) of a respective group (18) of panels are stacked and supported at

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~~their edges by a respective one of said carrier units (16) at a panel group formation station (24)~~

stacking and supporting the bodywork panels (12) of a respective group (18) of panels at their edges by a respective one of said carrier units (16) at a panel group formation station (24).

3. (currently amended) The method as claimed in claim 1, further comprising wherein the group (18) of panels in the carrier unit (16) is built up by means of the successive deposition of individual bodywork panels (12)

building up the group (18) of panels in the carrier unit (16) by means of the successive deposition of individual bodywork panels (12).

4. (currently amended) The method as claimed in claim 3, further comprising wherein the individual bodywork panels (12) are deposited in the carrier unit (16) manually or in an automated manner, forming the group (18) of panels

depositing the individual bodywork panels (12) in the carrier unit (16) manually or in an automated manner, forming the group (18) of panels.

5. (currently amended) The method as claimed in claim 2, further comprising wherein the group (18) of panels is transported from the panel group formation station (24) as far as the panel removal station (20) in a transport direction (14) that extends obliquely upward

transporting the group (18) of panels from the panel group formation station (24) as far as the panel removal station (20) in the obliquely upward transport direction (14).

6. (currently amended) The method as claimed in claim 1, further comprising wherein the respective group (18) of panels is transported by means of the transport device (10) during a predefinable cycle time, the cycle time depending on the required panel

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~~separation time of a complete group (18) of panels respectively located at the panel removal station (20)~~

transporting the respective group (18) of panels by means of the transport device (10) during a predefinable cycle time, the cycle time depending on the required panel separation time of a complete group (18) of panels respectively located at the panel removal station (20).

7. (currently amended) A transport device (10) for transporting bodywork panels (12) of a vehicle, the transport device (10) being endless, the transport device comprising:

a plurality of carrier units (16) that are spaced at intervals in an obliquely upward transport direction (14), each respective carrier unit (16) having at least two carrier elements (26) projecting substantially perpendicular to the transport direction (14) and spaced at a distance in a direction transverse to the transport direction, such that:

an associated group (18) of panels can be stacked on at least one carrier unit (16),
the group (18) of panels can be transported as far as a panel removal station (20),

and

in each case an individual bodywork panel (12) can be removed by a panel separation device (22) at the panel removal station (20),

wherein the intervals between the carrier units (16) in the transport direction and the distance between the carrier elements (26) in the direction transverse to the transport direction are adjustable,

wherein at least one of the number and the design construction of the carrier elements (26) used in a carrier unit (16) can be varied as a function of the geometric shape of a bodywork panel (12),

wherein the transport device is an inclined transport device, and

wherein the transport direction (14) is adjustable.

8-10. (cancelled).

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11. (previously presented) The transport device as claimed in claim 7, wherein it is a chain transport device.
12. (cancelled).
13. (previously presented) The transport device as claimed in claim 7, wherein the panel separation device (22) is constructed as a panel removal pivoting gripper.

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